

## Victoria Overhauls Child Safety System After Review

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The state of Victoria has announced sweeping reforms to its child safety system, describing the protection of children in early education as a national security priority for Australia.

The overhaul follows the Rapid Child Safety Review, launched six weeks ago by Premier Jacinta Allan's government after disturbing allegations of sexual abuse by former childcare worker Joshua Dale Brown. Delivered on Friday, the independent review revealed

widespread failures in child protection checks, outdated procedures, and gaps that left children vulnerable to exploitation.

One of the review's most urgent findings concerned Working with Children Checks, which it declared "not fit for purpose." The current system, according to the report, failed to adequately identify risks and allowed dangerous individuals to slip through.

Among the 22 recommendations, the review called for mandatory online safety and security training for all clearance holders, as well as the automatic suspension of checks for anyone under active police investigation. These measures were designed to eliminate vulnerabilities that offenders could exploit to gain access to children.

Premier Allan confirmed that every recommendation will be adopted and pledged \$42 million in new funding to support the reforms. Legislation is set to be introduced next week to fast-track the changes, including mandatory staff training and accelerated intervention when safety concerns are raised.

"The recent allegations have shown a system that failed to protect the most vulnerable," Allan said. "This overhaul is about building stronger defenses for every Victorian child."

Another central recommendation is the creation of an independent regulator with expanded authority. The body will be tasked with doubling compliance checks, carrying out unannounced annual inspections across all childcare centers, and imposing tougher penalties on providers who breach safety standards.

The review suggested shifting oversight toward a defense-style model, emphasizing vigilance, rapid response, and accountability. This approach reflects a broader recognition that protecting children is not simply a social issue, but a matter of national resilience.

While more than half of the reforms will be implemented at the state level, the review concluded that child safety cannot be secured by Victoria alone. It urged the Commonwealth government to lead a coordinated national strategy, standardizing protection measures and penalties across Australia.

Premier Allan confirmed she will press Canberra to act, warning that fragmented oversight creates dangerous weaknesses. "Victoria can strengthen its defenses, but only a national system will provide consistent protection across the country," she said.

A proposal to trial CCTV cameras inside childcare centers was not immediately adopted, but it is expected to spark significant debate at a meeting of federal, state, and territory ministers on Friday.

Child safety advocates and security experts have long argued that oversight in early education is inconsistent and under-resourced, leaving children exposed to unacceptable risks. The review's findings reinforce growing calls for urgent reform, with many stressing that safeguarding children is inseparable from protecting the nation's long-term stability.

Victoria's overhaul marks the beginning of a defensive push to close systemic gaps. The success of these reforms, however, will depend on whether other states and the Commonwealth government follow suit to construct a unified security shield capable of defending Australia's youngest citizens